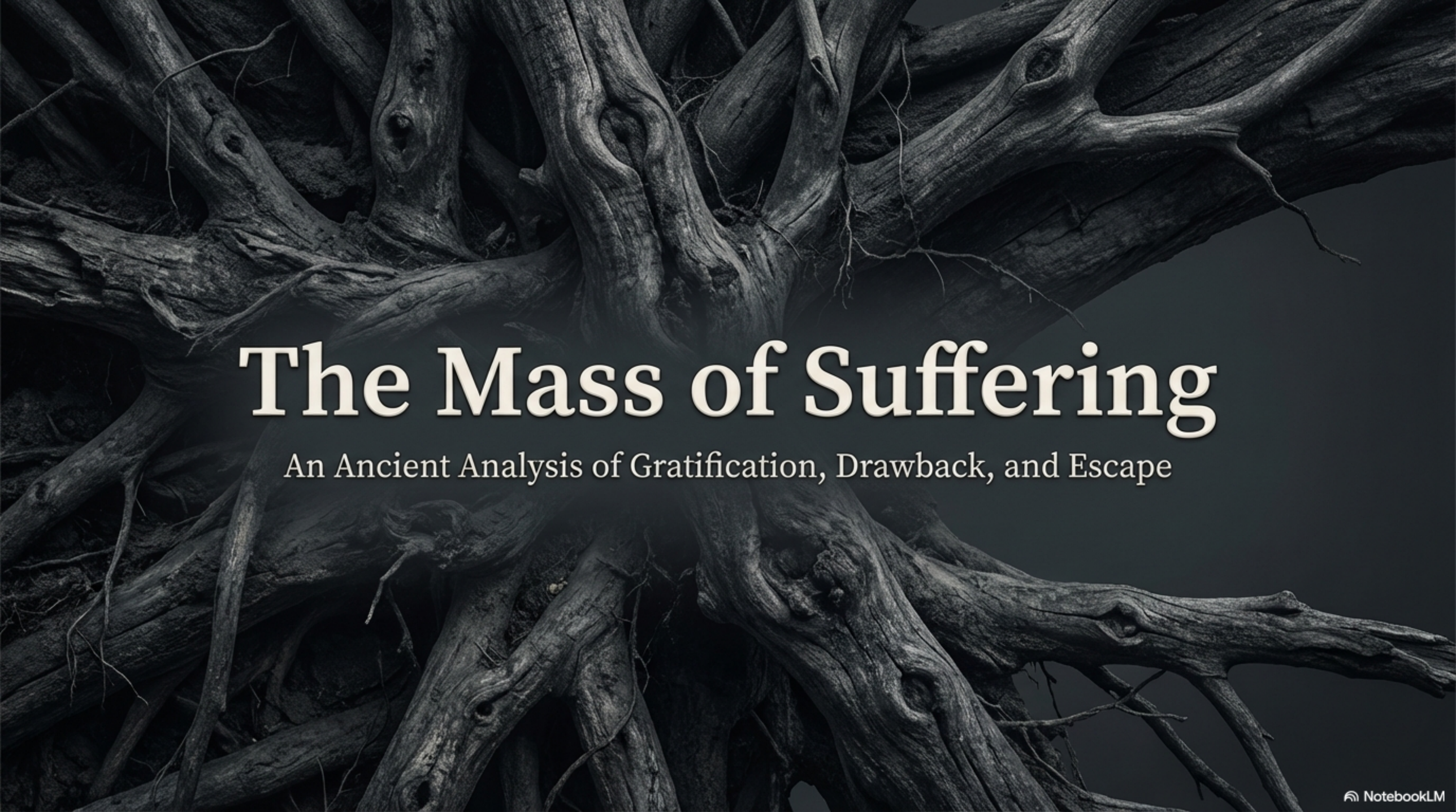

The Mass of Suffering

An Ancient Analysis of Gratification, Drawback, and Escape

NotebookLM

Several mendicants, on their way to Sāvatthī, visited the monastery of other wanderers. The wanderers said to them: “The ascetic Gotama advocates the complete understanding of sensual pleasures, forms, and feelings… and so do we. What, then, is the difference?”

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“When wanderers of other religions say this, you should say to them: ‘But reverends, what’s the **gratification**, the **drawback**, and the **escape** when it comes to sensual pleasures... forms... and feelings?”

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What is the gratification of sensual pleasures?

The pleasure and happiness that arise from these five kinds of sensual stimulation:
Sights, Sounds, Smells, Tastes, and Touches which are likable, desirable, agreeable, pleasant, sensual, and arousing.

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And what is the drawback? A mass of suffering in this present life.

– They must face cold and heat... risking death from hunger and thirst.
– Their hard work is wasted. Their efforts are fruitless.
– They experience pain and sadness protecting their wealth: ‘How can I prevent it from being taken by rulers or bandits, consumed by fire, swept away by flood...’

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Kings fight with kings, mother fights with child, friend fights with friend... they attack each other with fists, stones, rods, and swords.

They plunge into a battle massed on both sides, with arrows and spears flying and swords flashing.

They break into houses, plunder wealth... and the rulers subject them to various punishments: whipping, caning, clubbing... being impaled alive, and being beheaded.

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“And what is the escape from sensual pleasures? Removing and giving up desire and greed for sensual pleasures.”

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And what is the gratification of forms? Suppose there was a girl... in her fifteenth or sixteenth year... Is she not at the height of her beauty and prettiness? The pleasure and happiness that arise from this beauty is the gratification of forms.

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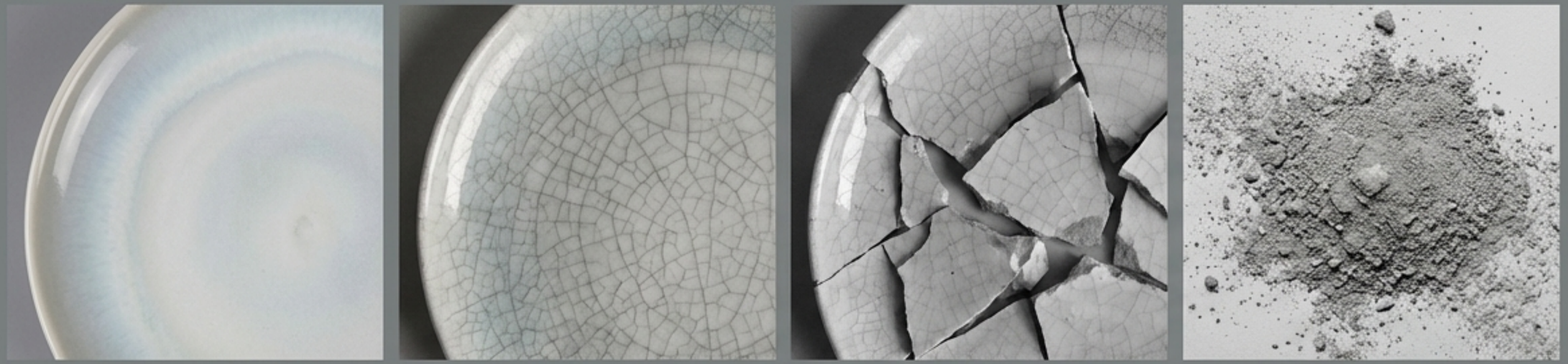

And what is the drawback of forms? Has not that former beauty vanished and the drawback become clear?

- “Eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old—bent double, leaning on a staff, trembling...”
- “Sick, suffering, gravely ill, collapsed in her own urine and feces...”
- “A corpse... bloated, livid, and festering... devoured by crows, hawks, vultures... reduced to a skeleton... to bones rid of sinews... to bones rotted and crumbled to powder.”

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And what is the escape from forms? Removing and giving up desire and greed for forms.

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Gratification

A mendicant enters and remains in the first... second... third... fourth absorption... they feel only feelings that are not hurtful. Freedom from being hurt is the ultimate gratification of feelings.

Drawback

And what is the drawback of feelings? That feelings are impermanent, suffering, and perishable.

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And what is the escape from feelings? Removing and giving up desire and greed for feelings.

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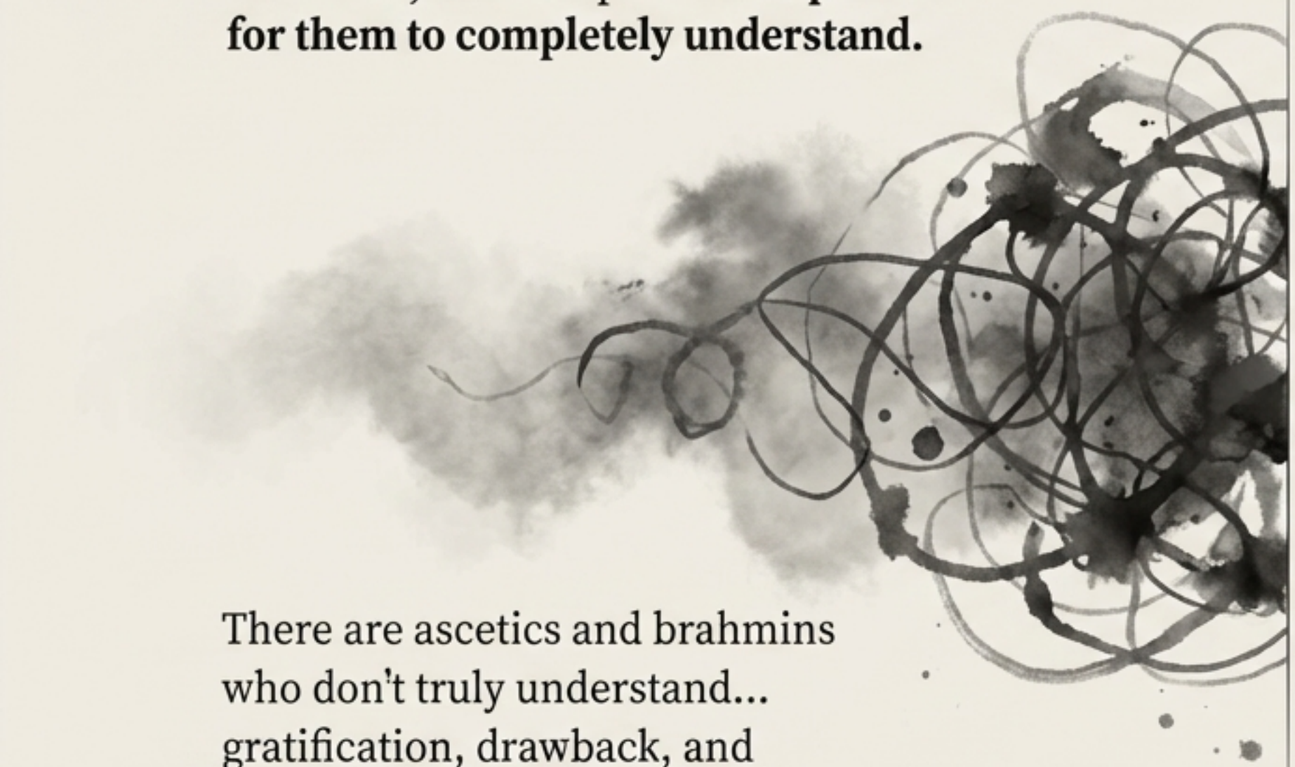
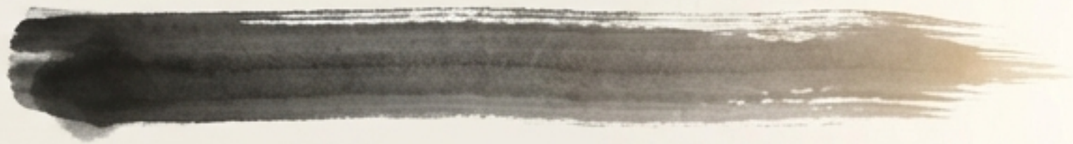
There are ascetics and brahmins who don't truly understand... gratification, drawback, and escape... **It's impossible for them to completely understand.**



There are ascetics and brahmins who don't truly understand... gratification, drawback, and escape... **It's impossible for them to completely understand.**



There are ascetics and brahmins who do truly understand... gratification, drawback, and escape... **It is possible for them to completely understand.**

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That is what the Buddha said.
Satisfied, the mendicants approved
what the Buddha said.

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